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Let's Be Honest About Batista

(Reprinted from the bulletin of the Committee on Pan American Policy)

Now that we have declared Fidel Castro Public Enemy No. 1, isn't it about time that Washington rectify the injustice which was done to Castro's pro-American predecessor, former President Batista?

In 1959, at the height of the pro-Castro delirium, President Batista was denied a visa to come to the United States. Instead, the State Department, in a typical buck-passing procedure, persuaded Portugal to give him refuge. He is in Portugal today.

The whole operation smacked of the hypocrisy of men who were satisfying their own consciences over the Castro love affair by branding his predecessor as unworthy of stateside residence. It was the old scapegoat technique, beloved by "Liberals".

The non-visa policy was particularly unjust and vengeful in view of the fact that President Batista, during his years of rule in Cuba, had been an unswerving and valued friend of the United States.

Moreover, there was an especial meanness and mealy-mouthedness about this exclusion of Batista in

view of the fact that the United States was and is giving refuge to Batista's corrupt and untrustworthy predecessor in the Cuban Presidency, Carlos Prio Socarras. Prio was the man who financed Castro's original invasion of Cuba. Even after Prio had been indicted for gun-running, his continued residence in the United States was never questioned by the State Department.

An even more glaring instance of State Department ambivalence was the granting of a visa to Manolo Ray. Ray had no compunction about remaining at Castro's side through the whole period of the butcheries in Havana in 1959. Coming to the United States red-handed from the Castro terrorism, he was repeatedly given, not only residence, but CIA money. Presently he is holding a lucrative post in Puerto Rico through the appointment of Governor Munoz Marin. Ray's case is only one of many. Miami today swarms with homicidal criminals who helped Castro in his killings and who were all unquestionably granted visas.

And then there was the case of Herman Marks who renounced his American citizenship to become Castro's official executioner. Disagreeing with Castro, he returned to the United States. Although he was arrested and the Department of Justice announced that it would deport him, that was nine months ago.

Instances could be multiplied.

There is something shameful and unworthy of America's cherished tradition of refuge for political exiles for the United States to shelter a Prio, a Ray or a Marks, but to draw the line at a Batista. We do not have to approve of his politics to recognize the fact that Batista was a staunch friend of the United States when we needed friends in the Caribbean. He is still a friend.

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